

## **EPA Freedom of Information Act Program**

EPA's National Freedom of Information Act Program is committed to providing oversight, leadership, direction, training and support for FOIA activities across the Agency's 10 regions and headquarters program offices. EPA's commitment to excellence is evident from the efforts already undertaken by the Agency to institute many of the activities required by Executive Order 13392, including the deployment of a state-of-the-art information technology infrastructure to support and manage this important Agency program. The Agency's decentralized program is customer-focused and efficiency-oriented.

### **Headquarters**

#### **Agency Chief FOIA Officer Assistant Administrator, Office of Environmental Information**

EPA's Chief FOIA Officer is responsible for Agency-wide FOIA policy and administration. The CFO provides periodic reports to the EPA Administrator on the status of the Agency's FOIA program, makes recommendations for improvements, ensures compliance with the Department of Justice's FOIA reporting requirements. EPA's program is decentralized.

#### **FOIA Requester Service Center**

The FOIA Requester Service Center provides a FOIA hotline that has been operational for more than 10 years. The Center is staffed by the FOIA Public Liaison, National FOIA Officer and National FOIA Specialists. Callers may obtain basic information on the status of their requests, general information on how and where to submit a FOIA request and information about the types of information available on EPA's Web sites. EPA also provides a Web site that allows requesters to obtain the status of their requests on-line. The Chief of the FOIA and Privacy Branch, in the Office of Environmental Information, the Agency's National FOIA Officer and National FOIA Specialists staff the FOIA Requester Service Center. The Branch Chief is directly responsible for the performance of the staff in the Requester Service Center.

**FOIA Public Liaison** – EPA's Public Liaison is available to assist with resolving disputes requesters have with the Agency. The Public Liaison facilitates timely FOIA responses, provides information on the status of requests and fosters greater openness and transparency in the Agency's FOIA administration activities. The Public Liaison is the Chief of the FOIA and Privacy Branch in the Office of Environmental Information and supervises the FOIA Requester Service Center staff.

**National FOIA Officer** – The National FOIA Officer (NFO) coordinates and oversees the Agency's FOIA program; issues initial determinations on fee waiver and expedited processing requests; develops and reviews FOIA procedures, policies, and guidance; provides advice to Agency FOIA personnel in the program and regional offices; prepares the Annual FOIA Report; maintains the official FOIA files for headquarters; provides FOIA trainings and manages the Agency's FOIA tracking and management system.

**National FOIA Specialists** – The National FOIA Specialists works under the supervision of the FOIA Public Liaison but receive general direction from the NFO. The National FOIA specialists prepare draft responses for all fee waiver and expedited processing determinations; route requests to the appropriate action office within the program; track FOIA requests for timeliness; monitor the quality of the responses; provide guidance to program personnel, in collaboration with the NFO, and maintain the official FOIA case files for Headquarters.

## **Regional and Program Support**

**Regional FOIA Officers** – A FOIA Officer is located in each of EPA’s ten regions. Regional FOIA Officers route requests to the FOIA Coordinator in the action office; tracks FOIA requests; provide guidance to regional personnel, in collaboration with the NFO; coordinate with the action office on initial fee waiver decisions; submit materials for the annual FOIA report; maintain the official FOIA files for the region; and monitor the quality and timeliness of responses from the regions.

**FOIA Coordinators** – FOIA Coordinators (FCs) in the Headquarters action offices are assigned requests from the Agency or Regional FOIA Officer, as appropriate. The FC directs the request to the subject matter specialist who identifies the responsive records.

**Subject Matter Specialists** - Subject matter specialist across the Agency provide responsive materials for Agency FOIA requests. These individuals are located in all Agency components and include all professional disciplines. The subject matter specialist may respond to the request directly or provide the responsive records to the FOIA Coordinator who responds for the Agency.

## **Office of General Counsel**

**Office of General Counsel** – The Office of General Counsel (OGC) plays a key role in the FOIA program. OGC provides legal advice on FOIA matters; issues final decisions on FOIA appeals, issues final confidentiality determinations and fee waiver and expedited processing appeal determinations, except when a conflict of interest arises, and serves as co-counsel with U.S. Department of Justice attorneys in FOIA litigation.

## **Office of Inspector General**

**Office of the Inspector General** - The Office of the Inspector Counsel provides all legal services and support to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) and is independent of EPA’s Office of General. OIG is an independent component of EPA. As such, the OIG manages its own FOIA response and appeal processes.